

English and French loans in Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch: an onomasiological approach

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This paper sets out to empirically test variation in the success rates of French and English loanwords in the two main varieties of Dutch, Belgian Dutch and Netherlandic Dutch. Crucially, we adopt a usage-based onomasiological perspective, taking the concept expressed by the loanword as starting point. This allows us to overcome a number of methodological issues present in existing loanword research (such as topic specificity; Zenner & Kristiansen 2013). Specifically, we calculate the relative preference for the loanword vis-à-vis alternative lexicalisations for a given concept (Zenner et al. 2012), as is demonstrated in Table 1 for the concept OVERHEMD '(dress) shirt'.

OVERHEMD (MAN)	Neth.Dutch	%	Belg.Dutch	%
<i>hemd</i>	29	19	27	93
<i>overhemd</i>	19	12	0	0
<i>shirt</i>	107	69	2	7

Table 1 - Lexicalization preferences for OVERHEMD (MAN)

Our analysis zooms in on differences in success rates for English and French loanwords in both varieties of Dutch. French loans were paramount in Belgian Dutch due to a long period of French ruling, but worked in against the uniformisation of Standard Dutch. Hence, they were advised against in language planning and are as such expected to be rejected in Flanders (Geeraerts et al., 1999). In The Netherlands, no such negative attitudes toward French loanwords exist and hence higher success rates can be expected. In contrast, this historical threat on the standardization process is lacking for English loans. Additionally, English has notable prestige as *lingua franca* in business and education in both regions (Zenner et al., 2013). Hence, more similarities between Belgian and Netherlandic Dutch are expected as concerns the success rates of English loans.

In order to test this hypothesis, the profile-based method (Table 1), first introduced in cognitive-linguistic lexicology in Geeraerts (1997), is applied to two different datasets. The first is a manual collection of more than 35,000 observations of 14 clothing concepts collected in magazines (1950-2012) and shop windows (1990-2012) for both varieties. The second dataset looks at 20 traffic concepts (e.g. VRACHTWAGEN 'lorry') in large Usenet (online discussion fora) and newspaper corpora (1958-2005), which comprise over one billion words, again for both varieties.

Our results show a marked preference for the use of both English and French loanwords in substandard language. Overall, we encounter a clear decrease in the success of French loanwords (though less pronounced in Netherlandic Dutch informal language). For English loanwords, specifically the Belgian Dutch data reveal an increase.

References

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